21 December 2023

**DECISION**

**GREYHOUND RACING VICTORIA**

**and**

**CHRISTINE ITHIER**

**Date of hearing:** 13 December2023

**Panel:** Judge Kathryn Kings (Deputy Chairperson) and Judge Marilyn Harbison.

**Appearances:** Mr Anthony Pearce appeared on behalf of the Stewards.

Mr Gerry O’Keefe represented Ms Christine Ithier.

**Charge:** Greyhounds Australasia Rule (“GAR”) 141(1) states:

(1) The owner, trainer or other person in charge of a greyhound:

(a) nominated to compete in an Event;

(b) presented for a satisfactory trial or such other trial as provided for by the Rules; or

(c) presented for any test or examination for the purpose of a stand-down period being varied or revoked,

must present the greyhound free of any prohibited substance.

**Particulars:** 1. You are, and were at all relevant times, a trainer licensed by Greyhound Racing Victoria and a person bound by the Greyhounds Australasia Rules.

2. You were, at all relevant times, the trainer of the greyhound “Sidewinder”.

3. Sidewinder was nominated to compete in Race 5, GREYHOUND ADOPTION PROGRAM, Tier 3 – Grade 7, conducted by the Healesville Greyhound Racing Association at Healesville on 27 January 2023 (the Event).

4. On 27 January 2023, you presented “Sidewinder” at the Event not free of any prohibited substance, given that:

(a) A pre-race sample of urine was taken from “Sidewinder” at the Event (the Sample);

(b) Chlorothiazide and hydrochlorothiazide were detected in the Sample.

**Plea:** Guilty

**DECISION**

Ms Christine Ithier is a licensed greyhound trainer who has been in the industry for approximately 20 years. She is the trainer of the greyhound, “Sidewinder”.

Sidewinder was nominated to compete in Race 5 at Healesville on 27 January 2023. On 27 January 2023 Ms Ithier presented Sidewinder not free of any prohibited substance. A pre-race sample of urine was taken from Sidewinder and chlorothiazide and hydrochlorothiazide were detected in the urine sample.

Chlorothiazide and hydrochlorothiazide are prohibited substances as defined by the Greyhounds Australasia Rules (“GARs”).

Sidewinder was later scratched due to weight variation. Ms Ithier was charged with a presentation offence under GAR 141(1) on account of her presenting Sidewinder for an event while not free of a prohibited substance.

The Greyhound Racing Victoria (“GRV”) Chief Veterinarian, Dr Steven Karamatic, provided a report. Dr Karamatic stated chlorothiazide and hydrochlorothiazide are prohibited substances and can cause either directly or indirectly an action or effect, or both, with one or more of the cardiovascular or urinary systems, such as by reducing cardiac output or causing dehydration through its diuretic effect. Dr Karamatic further stated that there were no products found during the kennel inspection as listed on the Swab Irregularity Report that contained the substances.

Personal medication and prescription for a different substance were produced. Neither contained hydrochlorothiazide or chlorothiazide. Treatment records did not detail the administration of chlorothiazide or hydrochlorothiazide to the greyhound. Subsequently, Ms Ithier checked her husband’s medication and discovered it contained hydrochlorothiazide.

On 27 January 2023, Ms Ithier’s husband took his medication and assisted her with Sidewinder, taking the greyhound from the kennel, placing its muzzle on and lifting the dog into the car. Ms Ithier’s husband did not wash his hands or put on gloves prior to handling the greyhound. This was the most likely cause of the positive swab.

As a result of the positive swab, Ms Ithier and her husband now wash their hands thoroughly and wear gloves when handling the dogs.

Ms Ithier is aged 70 and, as stated above, has been in the industry for approximately 20 years. This is her first offence. Ms Ithier pleaded guilty at an early stage and has cooperated throughout the investigation with the Stewards. In imposing a penalty, we have taken this into account, as well as the importance of general deterrence. We also acknowledge the importance of maintaining a level playing field by having a drug free industry. We take into account recent penalties in like matters. We accept Ms Ithier’s evidence that what occurred was accidental. She and her husband now wash their hands thoroughly before handling the dogs. Further, they wear surgical gloves when handling and mixing the dog food.

In all the circumstances we impose a penalty of a $500 fine.

In addition, Sidewinder is disqualified from Race 5 at Healesville on 27 January 2023.

Kathleen Scully

Assistant Registrar, Victorian Racing Tribunal